

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 ISO-00 CCO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

DOTE-00 EB-07 H-02 INR-07 IO-13 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

NSCE-00 SP-02 OC-06 PRS-01 SS-15 USIE-00 USSS-00

SY-05 FAA-00 WRD-01 SCCT-01 PA-01 SCA-01 SCS-03 /104 W

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R 241513Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6366

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS PFOR EG LY

SUBJECT: PRESS TREATMENT OF HIJACKING ATTEMPT IN EGYPT

1. SENSATIONAL TREATMENT OF "LIBYAN" HIJACKING ATTEMPT
DOMINATES EGYPTIAN PRESS AUGUST 24. STORIES, PRESUMABLY
OFFICIAL GOE ACCOUNT, DIFFERED ONLY IN MINOR DETAIL. THEY
STRESS THEMES THAT EGYPTIANS IN FULL MASTERY OF SITUATION FROM
THE START AND THAT QADHFAI FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR A BUNGLER.

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2. THE HIJACKING. ACCORDING TO PRESS, EGYPTIAN AIRLINE FLIGHT

O ASWAN LEFT CAIRO AIRPORT AT 0715 AUGUST 23 WITH 27 JAPENSE, 22 FRENCH, AND 30 OTHERS INCLUDING "ONE AMERICAN", FIVE LIBYANS, TWO ALGERIANS AND 35 EGYPTIANS AND "ARABAS" (USUAL EGYPTIAN TERM FOR GULF AND PENINSULAR BROTHERS). CREW TOTALED SIX. AT 0750 PILOT CONTACT CAIRO AIRPORT CONTROL TOWER TO REPORT THAT SEVEN PASSENGERS WERE TRYING TO HIJACK PLANE AND THAT HIJACKERS INCLUDED FIVE LIBYANS AND TWO ALGERIANS. PILOT SAID HE HAD BEEN ASKED TO GO TO TRIPOLI OR ANY AIRPORT OUTSIDE EGYPT. AT 0758, PILOT SAID HE WAS BOUND FOR LUXOR FOR REFUELING WITH AGREEMENT OF HIJACKERS. PILOT LANDED AT 0819, WARNING LUXOR CONTROL TOWER THAT HIJACKERS INSISTED THAT NO ONE SHOULD COME NEAR THE AIRCRAFT. ONE OF THE HIJACKERS CONTACTED CONTROL TOWER AND THREATENDED TO BLOW UP THE PLANE IN AN HOUR UNLESS IT WAS IMMEDIATELY REFUELED FOR DEPARTURE TO LIBYA. HIJACKER WAS ASKED TO EXTEND THE DEADLINE BECAUSE FUEL HAD TO BE SENT FROM CAIRO.

3. MEANWHILE, PRESS REPORTS, EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES MOVED OUT SMARTLY. PRIMIN SALIM GAVE DETAILS OF FRUSTRATION OF HIJACKING IN CAIRO PRESS CONFERENCE EVENING OF AUGUST 23. SALIM SAID ORDERS WERE ISSUED TO PREVENT PLANE FROM TAKING OFF, SECURITY FORCES BLOCKED RUNWAY, AND LOCAL GOVERNOR BEGAN RADIOTALKS WITH HIJACKERS. HIJACKERS DEMANDED THAT THREE LIBYANS CONVICTED BY EGYPTIAN COURT OF ATTEMPT ON LIFE OF FORMER LIBYAN RCC MEMBER UMAR MUHAYSHI BE RELEASED. THEY FURTHER DEMANDED RELEASE OF SALAH'ISA, DIRECTOR OF PDRY AIRLINE OFFICE IN CAIRO, AND PALESTINIAN SALAH MOHAMMED EL-EMARI, BOTH ACCUSED OF ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION OF FORMER SOUTH YEMEN PRIME MINISTER HAYTHAM.

4. WHILE TALKS CONDUCTED AN "ENGINEER" INTREPIDLY CRAWLED UNDER PLANE AND DEFLATED FRONT TIRE UNNOTICED BY HIJACKERS. ACCORDING TO SALIM, GOVERNOR THEN TOLD HIJACKERS THAT PLANE INOPERABLE AND PERSUADED THEM TO FREE WOMEN, CHILDREN AND SOME ELDERLY PASSENGERS. RELEASED PASSENGERS TOLD AUTHORITIES THAT TWO OF HIJACKERS HAD PISTOLS WHILE THIRD CARRIED DAGGER AND BAG FULL OF EXPLOSIVES. OTHER INFORMATION THEY PROVIDED ALLOWED AUTHORITIES TO ESTABLISH PLAN FOR /COMMANDO ASSAULT," WHILE GOVERNOR CONVINCED HIJACKERS TO ADMIT REPAIR CREW ABOARD AIRCRAFT. COMMANDO OFFICERS WEARING OVERALLS THEN BOARDED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PLANE ON PRETEXT OF DIAGNOSING BREAK DOWN, AND CLAIMING THEY NEEDED TOOLS, WERE ALLOWED TO DEPART TO REPORT ON CONDITIONS INSIDE PLANE. EACH OF COMMANDOS THEN ASSIGNED MISSION AND ATTACK CARRIED OUT WITHOUT INJURY TO PASSENGERS. HIJACKERS WERE "SLIGHTLY INJURED " BUT GIVEN TREATMENT AND DISPATCHED TO CAIRO UNDER GUARD.

5. AT CAIRO HOSPITAL HIJACKERS WERE FOUND TO BE WOUNDED,

WITH ONE IN SERIOUS CONDITION. INVESTIGATION SAID TO REVEAL THAT TWO OF HIJACKERS ARE JORDANIAN: ALI AHMED MAHMOUD OSMAN, OF PALESTINIAN ORIGIN, RESIDENT IN ABU DHABI, 32 YEARS OLD; AND MOHAMMED NAGUIB AHMED, COUSIN TO FIRST, EMPLOYEE OF KUWAITI TV, JORDANIAN PASSPORT, PALESTINIAN ORIGIN, 20 YEARS OLD. THIRD HIJACKER IS EGYPTIAN, AHMED MOHAMMED SULEIMAN, ALIAS AHMED ABU SERI, RESIDENT OF NASR CITY (CAIRO SUBURB), "UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENT."

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6. NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS AGREE THAT THREE HIJACKERS ARRIVED

CAIRO FROM KUWAIT, PROCEEDED TO LIBYA AND THEN RETURNED TO CAIRO TO CARRY OUT HIJACKING ATTEMPT BUT REPORTS DISAGREE ON DATES OF THESE MOVES. HIJACKERS SAID THEY BELONGED TO NEW ORGANIZATION, "NASSER ORGANIZATION", AND THAT THEIR LEADER, OSMAN, AGREED WITH LIBYAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICER SAID TARABISHI TO CARRY OUT OPERATION FOR 20,000 LIBYAN DINARS ADVANCE AGAINST 100,000 DINARS ON TERMINATION OF OPERATION.

7. PRESS DILIGENT IN CONVEYING PRESIDENT SADAT'S CONFIDENCE, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IF NOT INSOURCIANCE, IN FACE OF CRISIS. SADAT REPORTEDLY LEARNED ABOUT

HIJACKING FROM VUP BUBARAK AT 0900 AND IMMEDIATELY ISSUED FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS:

--MUBAREK SHOULD TAKE CONTROL OF ANTI-HIJACKING TEAM INCLUDING PRIMIN'S SALIM, AND MINWAR GAMASY

--SPEICAL FORCE OF "SHOCK TROOPS" SHOULD LEAVE FOR LUXOR AT ONCE AND TAKE HIJACKERS "DEAD OR ALIVE."

-- THERE MUST BE "NO RESPONSE" TO DEMANDS OF HIJACKERS AND NO BARGAINING.

--SHOCK TROOPS SHOULD SEEK TO INSURE SAFETY OF PASSENGERS.

--INFORM PRESIDENT OF RESULTS "AS SOON AS OPERATION ENDS".

8. WHILE MUBARAK SWINING INTO ACTION, SADAT DESCRIBED AS "QUITE SURE THAT QADHAFI'S MEAN CRIME, DESIGNED TO STRIKE FEAR INTO HEARTS OF EGYPTIANS, WAS ONLY TEMPEST IN TEAPOT." SADAT WENT ABOUT BUSINESS AS USUAL, INCLUDING SCHEDULED VISIT TO HIS DENTIST, WHERE HE SPENT MORE THAN HOUR AND HALF. PRESS REPORTED THAT PRESIDENT MADE NO MENTION OF HIJACKING IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH DENTIST, "CONSIDERING HIJACKING AS UNSUCCESSFUL PLOT DESTINED TO FAIL AS ALL PREVIOUS UNSUCCESSFUL PLOTS OF LIBYAN MADMAN." DENTIST WAS REPORTEDLY ASTONISHED TO LEARN OF HIJACKING LATER BECAUSE HE NOTED NOTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT PRESIDENT WHILE THEY WERE TOGETHER.

9. ACCORDING TO PRESS, A NAPPING SADAT WAS AWAKENED AT 1700 BY MUBARAK PHONE CALL INFORMING HIM OF HIJACKERS ARREST.

10. SALIM TOLD AKHBAR THAT PASSENGERS REPORTEDLY HAD NOT BEEN SEARCHED BEFORE BOARDING PLANE AND HE THEREFORE PLANS TO BE MERCILESS WITH CAIRO AIRPORT SECURITY OFFICIALS.

11. PLO DENIAL. PLO STATEMENT AUGUST 23, PRESUMABLY ISSUED IN CAIRO, SAID THAT PLO CONDEMNED HIJACING AND

HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH "SUCH ACTS WHICH ONLY HARM PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE AND JUST CAUSE." STATEMENT DEMANDED DETAILS OF OPERATION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BE REVEALED SO THAT FACT OF PALESTINIAN INNOCENCE WILL BE CLEAR.

12. LIBYAN DENIAL REBUTTED. ALL PAPERS REPORT LIBYAN FONMIN STATEMENT DENOUNCING HIJACKNG AND REJECTING RESPONSIBILITY. GUMHURRIYA COMMENTED THAT THIS WAS EITHER EXPRESSION OF GUILTY LIBYAN CONSCIENCE OR REFLECTION OF LIBYAN BELIEF THAT PEOPLE AND WORLD PUBLIC STUPID.

13. IN LEADING FRONT PAGE ARTICLE, GUMHURRIYA CHAIRMAN SAWI CALLED HIJACKING ABOMINABLE CRIME BUT LOOKED BEYOND IT TO SEEK "REAL SABOTEURS." SAWI DESCRIBED QADHAFI AS MERELY A "TORN GLOVE ON SUSPICIOUS FINGERS" AND CLAIMED IT REMAINED TO BE SEEN WHO ARE TURE CRIMINALS BEHIND CONSPIRACIES OF "UGLY AND MAD PUPPET" AIMED AT ISOLATING EGYPT. SAWI NOTED THAT CAMPAIGN AGAINST EGYPT MOUNTED ONLY AFTER OCTOBER WAR. ISRAEL IS BENEFICIARY OF CAMPAIGN, BUT "CANNOT POSSIBLY BE ALONE" SINCE IT IS "FOSTER CHILD OF TWO SUPERPOWERS" AND EACH WISHES TO SEE ISRAEL SURVIVE. IN ORDER TO LOOK "INNOCENT AS LAMBS," HOWEVER, REAL SABOTEURS LOOK FOR ASSISTANCE WITHIN ARAB RANKS. EGYPT DEFIES BOTH.

14. AHRAM TOOK HIGHER ROAD IN EDITORIAL CALLING FOR "STABLE STRATEGY AGAINST SOME ARAB TERRORIST GANGS (LIBYANS) WHICH HAVE TURNED THEIR BACK ON ISRAEL AND AIMED THEIR ACITIVITIES AGAINST ARABS AND EGYPT IN PARTICULAR." STRATEGY SHOULD BE BASED ON REFUSAL TO YIELD TO TERRORIST DEMANDS, WHATEVER PRICE MIGHT BE. "WE MAY LOSE AN INNOCENT PERSON, OR 10 OR EVEN A HUNDRED INNOCENT PEOPLE, BUT WE WILL NEVER RELEASE A CRIMINAL AND NEVER YIELD TO THEIR DEMANDS." FIRM STANCE WILL FRIGHTEN "COWARDS" FROM BECOMMING "STOOGES IN THE HANDS OF MADMEN OR PERVERTS. EILTS

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